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ABSTRACT

The search for a mission for the community college of the 1980's must begin with an examination of what the institution is. The community college has proven itself to be adaptable, in that it has, since its inception, changed in response to new conditions and demands. It operates with a continuing awareness of the community it serves. It has a persisting relationship with the learner. It extends educational opportunity to those who are not served by other institutions. It serves a diversity of students with varying goals, needs, and characteristics. Finally, it is in a unique position to serve as a link between existing members of a community's learning system. A clear, precise, and specific statement of mission for an institution with such a wide field of responsibilities and capabilities can only be developed at the school level, where its establishment is essential and must be a ongoing process. At the national and state levels, a mission statement must be broad and general enough to deal with the diversity in the community college. Such a statement would be, "the community college's mission is to encourage and facilitate lifelong learning, with the community as the process and the product." (AYC)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

THE DECADE AHEAD

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES: THE DECADE AHEAD

In these closing months of the 1970's there are developments in this country and abroad that dwarf our preoccupations with educational institutions. Those of us who have special interests in schools or colleges may appear to be pleaders for those possessions we hold dear at a time that our way of life more than our possessions is in jeopardy.

Perhaps "jeopardy" is not the right word, for it suggests "danger" and "peril." That's not an overstatement. However, beyond this there is a positive factor as well. There are possibilities in this time of unparalleled change for a quality of life better than we have known.

The point is, that heated and even informed discussion about how to finance education, the ups and downs of college enrollments, and whether Johnnie can read when he graduates from high school, can't hold a candle to public interest, including yours and mine, in the fact that the dollar buys less each year, gasoline is harder to get and it costs more, and nobody seems to have the answer to how we can get this nation back to the stability of the good old days.

Education per se, or as it is often put, education "period," is not a high priority item on either the public's agenda or that of policy makers. That's too bad, for surely there are values in learning for learning's sake. But the fact is, that if education is to capture public interest it has to be education <u>for</u> something. Somehow the case needs to be made that education is of utility as related to that dollar problem, and the energy crisis and the need for sense of purpose and direction in government.

As educators we have given our attention to patching the roofs of our structures, to more efficient heating and cooling, to improving the communication system while developments outside our walls are washing away at the footings. The basic, inexorable, unmistakable fact and force to deal with is that of CHANGE -- unparalleled and unprecedented change that perplexes the public, confounds the authorities and demands response from education, one of its instigators.

A. N. Whitehead has said:

> ...in the past the time-span of important change was considerably longer than that of a single human life. Thus mankind was trained to adapt itself to fixed conditions.
>
> Today this time-span is considerably shorter than that of human life and accordingly our training must prepare individuals to face a novelty of conditions.[1]

In the closing years of the 1970's, community colleges experience a "novelty of conditions." The institutions are changing—they have changed from the earlier days of high school extension and the remarkable period of expansion and community orientation of the 1960's.

The institution which sought a campus and other paraphernalia of the collegiate ways often functions in multiple locations throughout its district and chafes frequently in its collegiate harness even to the point of declaring that the collegiate mode might be defeating its purpose.

The college that enrolled late adolescent high school graduates to prepare them for upper-division work in four-year colleges now serves preponderantly people well beyond their early twenties and high school graduation, if indeed they have been graduated.

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[1] Foundations of Lifelong Education, p. 15

Most of the participants in college programs take a course or two while they work full-time or part-time. They are likely to be married and have children. And a majority are preparing either directly for employment or are trying to improve their job status.

Another significant change is in financial support and control of the institution. While earlier, both control and support were predominantly local, now the state provides a majority of the money and has more to say about how it will be used.

And the state raises questions about community college services that do not fit the categories of transfer or occupational programs. Why should the college get support for recreational and avocational programs? What business does the college have in nursing homes? Should the state pay for credit-free programs? Why are so many community college students not interested in or at least not getting a degree, a certificate, a credential?

Of great concern to the states is the increase in dollars required of them from relatively modest amount twenty years ago to a significant portion of their budgets as the institutions grew beyond most expectations and the proportion of state support becomes larger. No wonder that a spokesman for a legislative budget office asserted in the spring of 1979 that the state had reached a point where it had to have a say and it had to ask what are community colleges and actually what are they doing.[2]

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[2]Excerpted from a report to be published October 24, 1979 by the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges.

California aid to community colleges - more than $1 billion
Florida - $222 million
Kansas - about $ 17 million
Mississippi - $31 million
Illinois - $134 million
Missouri - $31 million
New York - $166 million
Virginia - $89 million

State Appropriations, 1979-80 - $3,338,839,000.

Clearly the institutions have changed and continue to change. Questions are raised increasingly, in the face of taxpayer movements and inflation, whether these are justifiable directions of change. And for the policy makers, they ask, shall we validate these changes in legislation?

Newspaper editorials elaborate on the theme, saying it is time for a hard look at community colleges and their mission. And within the institutions themselves, rising costs, changes in enrollment mix, and harder-to-get tax dollars require examination of priorities. Tough questions confront college leadership, sometimes resulting in the ultimate question--What are we willing to go to the barricades for?

Program priorities have changed, no question about that. When new community college legislation was under consideration in Illinois in the early 1960's, the primary concern was "When your child is ready for college will college be ready for him? There was fear that there would not be room enough in the colleges for the youth coming out of the high schools. The community college was sold on the basis, primarily, of providing college space and, secondarily, vocational-technical training. "Mission" as far as the public was concerned was "college." Now the community colleges of Illinois have shifted to a different order of emphasis. Does such change suggest that community college mission may be more a type of process than program?

The institutions are markedly not the same. The community colleges in Chicago wear a different sweatshirt from those in Western Illinois. There are different values and different political realities. The institutions serve unique communities and needs. Some say there are dangers in attempting to be specific with regard to mission.

"Anytime we can describe the community college in definitive, specific terms, we will destroy it. It has to change. It has to be different in different areas. You need to keep moving as a community college norm. We need to look at people but we tend to look at the institution. We should not try to push the river in a different direction."

Adaptability is one element in mission or process commonly agreed upon. The institution must be able to change as communities change with new conditions, demands or circumstances.

That modifying word, "community," is achieving greater recognition and importance. No question about it. Members of a county legislative body say that the mission of the community college is to keep pace with the community and "help us make this county an attractive one in which to do business. If you do that the college will by around a long time." The key element, say college spokesmen , is to be a community resource in cooperation with other community agencies.

"Increased community awareness" is now a high priority objective frequently cited in institutional plans. "Services shall reflect the needs of those persons residing in the college service area," declares a state-level document in Michigan. An awareness of the needs of personsin the college area requires a stance unfortunately not always found in educators or provided for in institutional structures. One of the biggest problems facing education may be a reluctance (or inability?) for people in education to relate on a regular basis with people in business, industry, the unions and agriculture. A note sounded repeatedly as one talks with community people about educational needs is their perception of a "self-contained enclave of educators."

At the same time the counterpoint is heard which conceivable signals different days ahead.

"Maybe now we'll get back to our job, to our real philosophy, that is, a total look at our community and to help it grow and prosper

and to do this because we think it is right and not because of financial need but because we want to make this community a better one."

In probing community-college relationships, a number of questions soon surface. Is the college role limited to response or reaction to community needs, pressures and requests? Or, are there not more sophisticated services appropriate which may involve identification and analysis of problems and proposed solutions? And further, should not the community college play a part in forecasting the shape of society to come, and leading its community to understand the coming changes, make provision for coping with them, and providing services to meet them?

And another question must be raised. Of all possible learners in the community setting, are there some whose needs should be given precedence? Although it may seem out of place to consult tradition when considering the effect of rapid change, it is worth recalling that community colleges and their progenitors, the public junior college, were established to extend educational opportunity. People of limited financial means now had a low-cost institution available. For those who could not leave the community to go to college there was one within commuting distance. And those uncertain about their academic abilities or who wanted programs geared more quickly to employment than the four-year colleges offered found an environment responsive to those needs. Historically, the community college was based on the assumption that there were large numbers of people not served by existing institutions and the unserved were to be the clientele of these new colleges.

The theme continues and is sounded in numerous ways. Community colleges should reach out. Go to the people unserved. Give priority to those who need the education they did not get at an earlier age. Serve the student with roots

in his community and who has a job there. Give those who need it a second chance. Bring people into the mainstream. Serve people handicapped by problems of cost and transportation.

These signposts suggest perimeters for those who fear the community college will attempt to be "all things to all people." Priority is given to those whose educational options are limited by a variety of circumstances. Very few people will disagree with these institutional aims. They have the ring of social worth. However, the necessary conditions and results are not as easy to accept.

If the community college is to reach the unserved, initiatives are required. Availability of the college connot be kept secret from those outside the primary communication networks in the community. We are told that the most significant obstacle to participation in adult learning activities is lack of information about such opportunities. Although legislators question community college recruitment efforts, equity is simply not possible unless those outside the conventional information systems are purposively sought.

And there is the problem of diversity. An institution that focuses on the "unserved" will find many reasons for that circumstance. In fact, it might be assumed that the "unserved" are in that condition because other institutions find it not feasible, disirable, or profitable to respond to their needs. Therefore, substantial costs are likely to be incurred in fulfilling this aspect of the community college charter. Financial costs of dealing effectively with diversity. And costs, too, in terms of prestige, for in our existing academic value system an institution that invites those needing a second chance and which gives priority to those of limited educational options is not going to threaten the status of the Ivy League, and this may bother some members of the

college family. Such institutions will have to establish prestige on bases quite different from those of the usual college ranking system. Although more difficult to make visible than conventional results, perhaps a way could be found to assign value in terms of learning stimulated and human potential released.

A careful observer of the community college scene is impressed by the remarkable broad spectrum of human beings involved. This comprehensive nature of the community college is an aspect of American education most difficult to interpret to visitors from abroad. And its apparent developing span prompts faculty within the institutions themselves to ask how much diversity can be accomodated within one organization.

Although, as indicated earlier, there are marked differences among institutions, in many there will be found: recent high school graduates beginning their college work, adults who already have college degrees, for example, a doctor familiarizing himself with recent developments in the computer field. There may be adults learning basic verbal and numerical skills as well as those qualifying for a certificate of high school completion. A high proportion of learners are qualifying for job entry or to be upgraded in employment. Community forums involve large numbers of the citizenry in discussing issues of taxation, abortion and in conveying health information.

There may be off-campus centers for Indo-Chinese. English taught as a second language. Among the learners are perhaps some who have formed a not-for-profit corporation to rehabilitate housing. Under CETA programs Chinese are qualifying in American cookery and learning English at the same time. And perhaps an "honors college" is organized for highly qualified students who are nto able to go away to college.

Out of that mix arise a good many questions. Can we have both honors programs and remediation? Should we build our future on CETA? With growth in numbers of adults do we give up youth? Can we afford to give some people more time to learn than others? Can we really bring them up to college level? Should we continue to be open to everyone or become more selective?

Although there is a tendency for many questions to be raised in program terms, the major issue seems to be whether diversity can be dealt with. The community college has a greater variety of participants fhan any other educational institution. There is really no question about that. The case has been made repeatedly for the advantages of having numerous program options available within a single institution for people who are undecided with respect to occupational and educational goals. Not as frequently have there been cited values in having a learning environment of people of different generations, ethnic backgrounds, and socio-economic characteristics. Some selective institutions deliberately aim to avoid the dangers of homogeneity by their admission policies. No such threat faces the community college. One is reminded of the question put to John Hannah, president of Michigan State University, some years ago. He was asked, "How large should a university be?" Obviously, the answer is, that depends. That depends on what you expect of the city. And similarly, how much diversity can be accomodated depends--depends to a great extent on what that college is to do. If the central aim of the college is to involve the citizenry in learning activities that result in a better community then the mixture of people involved can be beneficial. For this is the real world--continuum from slow learners to fast. A world of different income levels and social interests--businessmen and farmers, young people and older, an ethnic and racial mosiac. This is the community at learning not the groves of academe. There is not town and gown dichotomy and no need for simuation. Perhaps ther is better way to develop

viable communities than to involve the citizens, as many as possible, in learning experiences where they can interact. The community college we envision provides that opportunity. It is more a process than a place. The learners are the same people we meet in the shops and officies and plants. They govern the city and install the tlelphones. They deliver the papers and repair the cars. Can this diversity be accomodated? If it can in the community, who not by the college? And if by the college, certainly by all odd in the community.

Now hold on, some of you may be saying. Do you see the community college domain as the learning needs and interests of the whole city or community? You have proposed as a college aim the involvement of the citizenry in learning activities with the expectation that a better community will result. Isn't that a pretty tall order for a single educational institution, even one as broad-gauged as the community college? Obviously such concerns are justified. The college has neither the capacity nor the resources on its own to be the learning system for the community. Even beyond that, such an approach collides immediately with the elements of mission already proposed. However, the community college is uniquely qualified to become the nexus of a community learning system, relating organizations with educational functions into a complex able to respond to the population's learning needs.

"Nexus" is defined as a "bond, link, or tie existing between members of a group, a means of connection between things." In almost any community there are organizations that provide opportunity for formal, non-formal and informal learning activities. Among thses are radio and television, newspapers, libraries, museums, schools, colleges, theater, parks, orchestras, dance groups, unions, clubs, etc. An institution dedicated to the encouragement of learning is aware of the wealth of community resources available and utilizes such means

as fully as possible. Granted that is true, what qualifies the community college to play a "nexus" role? What attributes prompt it to initiate "links" or "connections" among members of the learning system?

One example is found in the fact, as described earlier, that for many community college learners education is concurrent with employment and civic activities. They participate in other organizations. They may be officers in unions or on library boards or members of a community dance group or orchestra. They are on the board of the YMCA and the League of Women Voters and the Taxpayers League. A survey of community college "students" would find them identified with a multitude of voluntary associations that characterize American community life. In Scandinavia, the major popular associations encourage and sponsor adult learning activities with remarkable participation rates. Similar possibilities are open to the community college as it joins with those organizations for which it provides a common ground. Informal, personal relationships can lead to organizational ties.

There is another feature of these community institutions which aids the connecting process. A large number of faculty are active in the practice of their trade and profession as well as in their teaching role. Sometimes referred to as "professor-practitioners," or adjunct professors, real estate insurance brokers, lawyers, engineers, craftsmen and doctors, provide further means for linking up with other parts of the community's learning system. Similar possibilities exist through numerous advisory committees to college programs as well as linkages established by use of "clinical" facilities in health, business and industrial settings.

With its vertical connections in the educational hierarchy and its horizontal relationships with other community agencies, the community college can literally be "the middle-man." One would think that schools, community

colleges and universities would have the most natural of connections as learners move through them in the formal education process. All too often, though, that is not the case. Students seem obliged to jump from pool to pool rather than finding themselves in a continuing stream. In one state, where there has been a dramatic decline in achievement levels of secondary school students, the chariman of the State Board of Education pleads for cooperative activities between community colleges and the schools before the high school leavers apply for admission to community colleges. The self-interest of community colleges is certainly involved, for most of those students will be knocking on their doors. One would expect collaborative relations to be of the highest order among institutions that have in common community support, community governance, and community orientation, such as is true of the schools, community schools and community colleges.

In some states there is now a legislative mandate for such relationships, with cooperation and coordination as conditions for state funds. However, even without that pressure institutions of their own volition now cooperate in data processing, in sharing of facilities, and in establishing inter-institutional faculty teams. Also, in a number of places community colleges provide space for university programs and they have worked out articulation agreements that are tantamount to automatic transfer for qualified students.

Perhaps the strongest case for the nexus role of the community college rests upon its information capabilities. If the college is to identify and analyze community problems and propose solutions, and if the college is to forecast the shape of society to come, and if the college is to identify and seek out those who have educational needs, and if the college is to have the knowledge of the community required to deal with diversity, then obviously the college must know its community and must have data projecting further developments.

Da - ollection is not accomplished by reading news releases. What is required is daily communication with the business community, the county and city planning bodies, employment agencies, research organizations, the Chamber of Commerce, state and federal agencies, school officials, census bureaus, and the media. Here's the point. The community college in the very process of doing what it needs to do to function effectively, maintains relationships which qualify it to be a useful nexus for the community learning system.

We are on a search for a description of community college mission. For a variety of reasons many people want to know more specifically what the tasks are of the institution and what they ought to be. The interests of legislators have been stepped up with increase in appropriation of state funds. Beyond any doubt the colleges are changing what they do. Twenty years age most legislation apparently envisioned their role as service to recent high school graduates who wanted a year or two of post-secondary schooling in the local community before taking a job or going on to the university. Now, as noted previously, the majority of students are part-time; they have already assumed responsibilities of job and family life. Many are there for programs or services that do not fit the arrangement of semesters and credits. A good deal of the work is not in a campus setting. An increasing number of learners have already received degrees of associate and beyond. Under contract, services are provided in business and industry and governmental agencies. Courses are taken through radio and television and newspapers with the possibility that the learner will not enter a college classroom, but will earn college credit. Learning activities are made available in nursing homes and condominiums, recreation centers and correctional institutions. A hundred examples could be given of differences between the community college of 1980 and the college of 1965.

But what of the college through this decade of the 80's? Seldom has there been so much discussion in state capitols, and in the institutions themselves, about services the colleges should provide and, of course, who should pay. We have been seeking for a sense of mission. We questioned hundreds of policymakers, educational practitioners, and community people in a number of states about what the community college should be doing. The responses are varied. Frustration is often evident. Frequently, structures, physical facilities and existing policies and even terminology are perceived to constrict and to compel institutional behavior no longer appropriate to changed circumstances.

We asked what the institutions should do during the next ten years. We pressed for a sense of priorities and the responses came. "We should work more closely with business and industry. There will be more adults. Older people will be served in larger numbers. With the requirements for competency tests in the secondary schools, one of our big jobs will be "remediation." We will work in partnership with other community agencies. A greater proportion of students will be in the technologies. Institutions ought to try to develop their own sense of mission and then make the case for resources for the people in the state capitol. We need to be moving out to where the people are. We will serve more people but have fewer FTE's. Community colleges should work out their own approaches or they are just going to be another institution in a declining community oc higher education. If the members of the community supporting the institution want these programs (leisure-type courses) we will provide them."

On the surface there are few compelling threads of broad agreement, none strong enough to suggest that this or that is the community college mission. The thought begins to take form that perhaps the most important issue is not

really what the community college is to do, but what it is to be. Clearly change in our society is so rapid that what is required today may be an option tomorrow or even forgotten. And what is not known today could be commonplace tomorrow. The communities that are now tha context for community college operations are vastly different and the pace of change in them is uneven. The kind of resources available in community learning systems will be different. A statement of mission for institutions that cover such a variegated field must be general and not specific. It cannot be put in program terms and be useful, that is, not for the community college as a whole. So of basic and prior importance to the concept of mission--what the institution is to do--is a description of what the instition will be. A useful and appropriate analogy can be found in an approach to suitable education for individuals in this world of change. "For the first time in history," writes Edgar Faure, "education is now ingaged in preparing men for a type of society which does not yet exist."

The theme of dealing with change and the unknown is amplified with respect to preparing people for maximum vocational mobility.

> "Educational action to prepare for work and active linf should aim less at training young people to practice a given trade or profession than at equipping them to adapt themselves to a variety of jobs, at devleoping their capacities continuously, in order to keep pace with developing methods and working conditions."[3]

So this notable report of UNESCO urges that we,

> "no longer assidously acquire knowledge once and for all, but learn how to build up a continually evolving body of knowledge all through life - 'learn to be.'"[4]

What people will do throughout their lives will undoubtedly change with respect to occupational pursuits, modes of communication and transportation, enerly sources, food, leisure time activities and family patterns. Therefore,

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[3]Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow, INESCO, 1973 page 196

[4]Ibid. p. vi.

just as the individual needs education to be himself, to "become himself," whatever the circumstances, just so, institutions with this aim require similar characteristics themselves. What they will do cannot now be precisely stated. What is needed is institutional capability to determine what is appropriate and needful in given circumstances. And for this capability, we must liik to qualities of institutional "being."

In our search for mission these qualities have already been postulated. They emerge out of a melange of discussion, observation, and reflection. They do not describe what the institution is to do. They are not a mission statement, but they could well be considered as requisite elements in a community college capable of formulating its mission. They occur with pronounced frequency in community colleges usually judged to be superior.

1. The college is adaptable. It is capable of change in response to new conditions and demands, or circumstances.
2. The college operates with a continuing awareness of its community.
3. The college has continuing relationships with the learner.
4. The college extends opportunity to the "unserved."
5. The learners are broadly diverse.
6. The college has a nexus function in the community's learning system.

One could question the word used. For example, does adaptable mean that the institution is always influenced by its community and does not play a role in shaping that community? No, adaptability also carries the commotation that the organization has a relationship that improves its capabilities to function in its environment. It will help shape as well as be shaped. Is "awareness" a strong enough term? Without going into extended detail, "awareness" would seem to be a very strong concept. The organization is alive, alert, utilizing its senses to probe for meaning in environmental signals and cues.

Awareness suggests groad rather than tunnel vision. It implies a positive, anticipatory stance.

Some may question diversity as an essential element. The view here is of diversity as a contributing factor in the learning process for those who are "learning to be."

Concerns about instituitonal mission are understandable. Change is often unsettling. Perceived competitors vie for territory we have occupied. New voices tell us what to do. We are held accountable for developments that appear to be outside our control. And the conventional methods of projecting future developments are not working.

We are those who appropriate funds for the institutions would undoubtedly find it a decided relief, we imagine, to have a clean, precise, and specific description of what the institutions are to do. But that cannot be done on a national level. Perhaps not at the state level. And in the individual institution it must be a continuing process, not once and for all. What can be sought for at national and state levels is for the establishment of conditions that allow institutions to be cabable of determining suitable actions within broad policy guidelines. Of greatest concern to those interested in appropriate learning opportunities should be the continuing viability of the organization rather than a catalogue of its services.

Repeatedly, we have referred to the tendency to respond to questions of mission in terms of institutional programs. We have said that the fact of rapid change in our society and the dissimilarity of communities repudiate the utility of such an approach. However, a general statement would be of value and it is not entirely beyond our reach. It is therefore proposed as a synthesis of considerations presented that the mission of community colleges be stated in this fashion:

To encourage and facilitate lifelong learning, with community as process and product.

It is through the cooperative mode that the community college achieves its distinctiveness. It is to serve the community and it is to do more than that. It is to be creatively occupied with the community. It is the community's college, a vital part of an integrated system of community services. If it limits itself to the conventional academic area, no matter now great its numbers might become or how excellent its programs, it remains the lower level of a pyramid of academic prestige with the graduate school as the cap.

But in the community setting the college is on familiar terrain. It functions in a complex of organizations designed to provide for people's basic needs and to enliven and enrich their lives. And in working with organizations, agencies, bureaus, the policy-setting groups, and the decision makers, the college finds the surest ground for communication--shared effort and common participation.

The word "common," or in the Latin, communis, is the root word for both "community," and "communication." When we speak of community we mean more than people living in the same locality, even more than people with a common interest. We envision a condition where people learn to communicate, where there can be a sense of communication and interchange of thoughts and ideas. To develop "community" means to expand or realize the potentialities of the place and the people and "to bring gradually" to a fuller, greater, or getter state." The community college that focuses on education for community development participates in that process.

This is education that can capture public interest. This is education for essential public purposes. This could be the central element in the work of community colleges in the 80's. Education for community and individual development. The need exists. The opportunity is at hand, The quality of our responses is the key variable - What will you do about it?

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